JOB INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

L'INSTITUT ROEHER INSTITUTE & MULTI-ETHNIC ASSOCIATION FOR THE INTEGRATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

l'Institut Roeher Institute

&

Multi-Ethnic Association

for the

Integration of Persons with Disabilities

JOB INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Copyright © 2003 L'Institute Roeher Institute

All rights reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system, without the prior consent of the publisher is an infringement of the copyright law.

National Library of Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Job integration for persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities / L'Institut Roeher Institute & Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities

ISBN 1-896989-82-9

1. People with disabilities – Employment – Canada. 2. Diversity in the workplace – Canada. I. Roeher Institute. II. Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities. III. Title.

HD7256.C3R34 2003 362.4 0484 C2003-905142-0

L'Institut Roeher Institute
Kinsmen Building, York University
4700 Keele Street
North York (Toronto), Ontario, M3J 1P3
Tel.: (416) 661-9611
Fax: (416) 661-5701
TDD: (416) 661-2023

Institute President
Cameron Crawford

Written by
Doris Rajan and Teresa Penafiel

Design and Production
Is Five Communications

The Recommended citation for this publication is:
Roeher Institute, Job Integration for Persons with Disabilities from Ethnocultural Communities. Toronto (North York), Ont. L'Institut Roeher Institute, 2003.

The Roeher Institute gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Human Resources Development Canada in enabling completion of this project. The analysis, views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of Human Resources Development Canada.

Table of Contents

Overview and Acknowledgements i

1. Participant Outreach and Recruitment Process 1

2. The Seminar Design 3

3. Seminar Outcomes 7

- Vancouver 7
- Montreal 13
- Halifax 21
- Toronto 27

4. Summary of Outcomes 35

- Similarities and Differences 35
- Needs and Areas of Interest 39
- Follow-up 39

5. The Next Phase of Work 41

- City-Specific Directories 41
- Development, Production, Distribution of Fact Sheets 41
- Internet Bulletin 41
- Seminar II 41

Appendices:

Appendix #1: Invitation Letter 43

Appendix #2: Registration Form 45

Appendix #3: Flyer 46

Overview and Acknowledgements

Canada is known internationally for its cultural diversity and advanced level of tolerance. The contributions that immigrants have made to the socio-economic development of this country is a direct result of our pursuit of inclusion.

However there are a number of obstacles that immigrants — either newcomers or groups of immigrant origin — face within the integration process, i.e. finding a place to live and a job; learning a new language; adapting to a new social, medical, legal, educational and economic system. This process is intensified for ethnoculturally diverse people with disabilities who face additional barriers to inclusion, such as social and labour force exclusion and unequal access to appropriate health care and housing.

Economic marginalization and the resulting poverty is at a critical point for Canadians with disabilities, particularly for immigrants and/or those from non-majority ethnocultural communities, making this issue an economic, social, and human rights priority.

In the Speech from the Throne, January 30, 2001, the Government of Canada confirmed its commitment to addressing difficulties that newcomers and other disadvantaged Canadians face:

"Some Canadians face particular challenges in upgrading their skills and enhancing their education. The government will take steps to make it easier for them to access skills and learning".

The present report reflects the partnership of L'Institut Roeher Institute and the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with disabilities in developing resources to increase awareness of the challenges that people with disabilities from different ethnocultural communities face.

The Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities offers information, referral and support services, support groups, specific programs for people with intellectual disabilities, public awareness activities, multi-lingual information sessions, and employability development services. Founded in Montreal in 1980, by a small group of parents, the mission of the organization is to promote the integration of people with disabilities from different ethnocultural communities into their new society.

L'Institut Roeher Institute is widely recognized for its research, policy, and social development activities and for furthering the equality, participation and self-determination of people with intellectual and other disabilities. The Institute has extensive background and is currently engaged in many training, education, leadership development initiatives, as well as in publishing and dissemination activities.

With the understanding of the prime importance of economic equity as it relates to health and social integration, the Multi-Ethnic Association has made the job integration of persons with disabilities

from ethnocultural communities a priority. Research has been conducted by the Association to identify the obstacles that the target communities experience when they are of working age and wish to enter the job market. The findings of this research has resulted in the development of training resources that are targeted for persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, their parents and other family members, and service providers from both disability-specific organizations and employment support services.

These resources have been developed in specific response to job integration barriers to full participation, addressing issues related to language, cultural differences, points of conflict with the mainstream culture and economic system, discrimination related to immigration and refugee status, and racism. The training resources have national applicability that will help advance inclusion for persons with disabilities from diverse ethnocultural communities in Canada.

The Roeher Institute and the Multi-Ethnic Association partnered to develop a National Training Seminar based on the Association's Job Integration Program and to operationalize the reproduction, marketing and distribution of the associated resources. The primary purpose of the first phase of our partnership was to disseminate the resources of, and provide national training on, the Multi-Ethnic Association's "Disability - Immigration - Employment" program. Our sites were set on increasing the integration of working-age individuals from ethnocultural communities into employment centres, the mainstream education system and ultimately the labour market itself.

Our objectives were:

- To raise the level of awareness around the specific job integration barriers that people with disabilities from diverse ethnoracial backgrounds may experience.

- To provide service providers, management and policy makers with strategies to address some of these barriers.

- To develop seminars that would both provide information and train service providers on the "Disability - Immigration - Employment" program of the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Person with Disabilities.

- To deliver the seminars in major cities of Canada to relevant employment and/or social service organizations working on these issues of disability and employment.

An underlying aim was to foster dialogue and exchange between people and organizations that have tended to operate largely in isolation from one another. We focused our efforts on Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Halifax, given the cultural and racial diversity of those cities.

This report was prepared by **Doris Rajan** of the Roeher Institute and **Teresa Penafiel** of the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities.

We wish to thank the following individuals and organizations, who greatly contributed to the success of this project through their extensive support and commitment:

Joan Zarbatany – Roeher Institute
Peijian Shen – Vancouver
Mary Woo Sims – Vancouver
Ifty Illyas – Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures, Halifax
Crystal Gallop – Halifax, Association for Community Living (ACL)
Rabia Khedr – Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO), Toronto
Marie Paul – ERDCO, Toronto
Mazin Aribi – ERDCO, Toronto
Linda Cornwall – ERDCO & Women's Health in Women's Hands, Toronto
Ali Mohamed – Link Up Employment, Toronto
Collinda Joseph – HRDC

We gratefully acknowledge the generous financial contribution of Human Resources Development Canada and their recognition of the importance of this and related future work in furthering the inclusion and participation of ***all*** people with disabilities in Canada.

Cameron Crawford
President

105-05223/

1

Participant Outreach and Recruitment Process

It was decided that the Roeher would handle the administrative duties associated with organizing the Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto seminars. Since the Multi-Ethnic Association has the databases and key organizational contacts, they conducted all organizational duties for Montreal.

Joan Zarbatany of the Roeher—with the support of Doris Rajan—developed city-specific lists in the form of databases for Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto (See Appendix #4). These extensive lists identified organizations that could be categorized as: 1) Disability related, 2) Ethno-specific and/or immigrant services and 3) Employment services—with a particular emphasis on those organizations geared to people with disabilities or to immigrants.

In each city a key contact person/organization was identified and they assisted the project in 1) obtaining an accessible and appropriate location for the seminar, 2) recruiting participants who would best benefit from this seminar and 3) in some cases, helped with supplying some materials and organizing catering services.

The key service providers invited were those whose role is to either provide employment service, or settlement and other ethnocultural organizational services, and disability organizations. In addition, the participation of people that have and are currently experiencing labour market exclusion was encouraged in order to attain their personal expertise and articulation of their own needs and experiences, as well as their ideas around strategies.

Once a location and date were confirmed, the following city-specific materials went out to all those invited to attend*:

- Invitation Letter
- Registration Form
- Agenda
- Flyer – for people to photocopy, post and/or distribute within organizations to extend the outreach.

*See Appendices 1, 2, 3 for samples.

2

The Seminar Design

Due to the varied levels of awareness, knowledge and organizing around this issue, customized city-specific seminars were developed to meet the particular needs of that location.

Since these were pilot training seminars, we were continuously editing and adding components based on reactions to the initial content and emerging needs. The impetus for every change was the pursuit of the project objective—to provide the most pertinent information and resources to key city employment, disability and immigrant service organizations in ways that provide workers with the skills and tools that will work towards the integration of ethnoracial people with disabilities into employment centres, employment training programs and the labour market itself.

The actual seminar design was thus flexible and participant driven within the context of an intended framework. The following presents the general seminar framework.

Registration and introductory information on the issue

The day began with registration, coffee and informal introductions.

We began with a review of the objectives for this seminar:

- To raise the level of awareness of the experiences of ethnoracial people with disabilities moving more specifically into the issue of employment;
- To prompt thought about participants' own organizations and how they can improve access to services for this community of people;
- To meet each other and develop the necessary networks and dialogues that will aid in the identification and coordination of relevant services; and
- To realize an ultimate goal—the initiation of a process of change to integrate all people with disabilities to employment services, educational systems and finally the labour market.

The introduction continued with an outline of the background to this project.

Outlining the issue

Doris Rajan presented some of the Roeher's work on the economic situation for people with disabilities—specifically in the context of the work initiated in the document "On Target" produced in 1993.

She offered some preliminary findings from the concurrent project/study work that the Roeher is presently doing in updating "On Target", entitled *Revisiting the Labour Market System: Trends, Impacts and Emerging Issues for People with Disabilities.*

The following findings were shared in order to demonstrate the critical nature of the issue of people with disabilities and employment.

- "On Target"—both a socio-demographic profile of labour market participation of people with disabilities, as well as an examination of the complex policy and program structure that affect the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market—showed that the rate of non-participation of people with disabilities in the labour force is over twice as high as that for people without disabilities and if people with disabilities were participating at the same rate as non-disabled people there would be over 500,000 more people with disabilities in the workforce.

- The research also indicated that neither disability nor severity of disability was the primary reason why so many individuals were outside of the labour force.

- Findings also showed that the factors for this exclusion fall outside of an individual's ability to work.

- Therefore, barriers such as discrimination in employment practices, people not being able to gain access to the variety of supports that they need to train and/or to work, barriers to higher level education and the need for the continuation of income support for disability-related costs while working are the reasons for such labour market exclusion.

Doris Rajan also explained that when you add ethnicity, culture, language, migration and race issues, the experience of disability is often referred to as double oppression; and is tripled for women with disabilities from ethnoracial backgrounds.

Teresa Penafiel provided a concise overview of the obstacles to job integration and social integration faced by persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities. She drew largely from the following major points**:

- For most persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, a job represents the only model for social integration. It marks the attainment of adulthood, of "citizenship." It makes it

possible for them to assert their identity and gain independence along with a positive self-image. Why do these persons have more difficulty finding a job? What obstacles do persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities have in common and how can job integration services take their needs into account?

- The first specific obstacle to the social integration of persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities is the cultural perception of disability that we already talked about. It will have an influence on every phase of the person's life. Another major obstacle - the form of immigration and status upon arrival - can also have a significant impact on the integration of the person with a disability. Furthermore, it is a situation over which he or she has no control. If the person is turned down, subjected to an extended waiting period, or finally accepted as part of a sponsorship arrangement rather than as an independent immigrant, it can change the entire course of his or her social integration.

- In fact, these types of systemic obstacles established by the Canadian Immigration Act and other policies that can limit the access of persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities to programs or services are a source of isolation, discouragement and sometimes breed a negative view of the so-called "host" society.

- Other obstacles to social integration linked to the person's disability are the barriers to learning official languages. In fact, few language-training centres are accessible to persons with physical limitations. There are no special courses for persons with hearing or visual impairments. Adults with intellectual impairments from ethnocultural communities are faced with the same situation.

- With obstacles like these to overcome, it is not surprising that persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities find it difficult to integrate into society, much less the job market.

*** Please note — This section is from the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities' Pre-employability Kit #3: "Awareness / Resources" – for Service Providers.*

Reflecting on their Organization and Change

We then moved into the more interactive/group discussion section of the seminar whereby people were asked to reflect on their own organization and the experiences of people with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds in attempting to access services.

People were asked to spend some time talking about: 1) what their organization does and 2) their experiences with people with disabilities, people from ethnocultural/immigrant communities, or both. They were asked to think about the latter in terms of the challenges that they experienced in attempting to provide service, and what worked and why.

Initially we had planned to break into the following four small groups to have the above discussion: 1) generic employment services, 2) disability employment services, 3) immigrant and ethno-cultural

organizations and 4) individuals—noting that people may not see themselves in any of these groups or that they may see themselves belonging to more than one. The intent here was to then report back in a large group to talk about 1) some of the things that they could do to make their service accessible to ethnocultural people with disabilities and 2)what resources they would need to make that happen. However, as you will see in the seminar outcome section, this did not happen.

Video and speakers

After lunch we showed an excerpt from the video *Three Lives – A Journey out of Darkness* produced by Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario. Teresa then gave an overview of the Association's training kits – *Kit #1 - "Your job research", Kit #2 – "Your son/daughter and the job research, Kit #3 – "Awareness/Resources" – for Service providers.*

Then we listened to a guest speaker tell their own story about the quest for job integration. We also intended to have an employment centre service worker share some best practices in working with people with disabilities from ethnoracial communities, however, this was not the case in all four seminars.

Next steps

The last section of the seminar was the Wrap-up where we summarized what we had done and closed with thoughts on what would make a difference in terms of the things that could be done right away, as well as what people felt needed to happen in the long term.

Participants were told that the list of participants would be sent out (after obtaining each individual's consent to be on that list). We also shared information on how to get the Multi-Ethnic Association's resources and the ERDCO video.

We asked people to keep in touch with one another and to let us know how things were going and how we might continue to support their work.

3

Seminar Outcomes

Vancouver

Wednesday, March 20, 2002

- *Agenda*
- *Organizational Representation*
- *Interesting Notes*

AGENDA

Vancouver – Wednesday, March 20, 2002 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Roundhouse Community Centre Multi-Media Room, 181 Roundhouse Mews

I.	Registration and Coffee	8:30– 9:00
II.	Welcome, Introduction and Purpose of Training	9:00– 9:15
III.	Barriers to integration faced by persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds generally, then specifically as related to job integration	9:15-10:00
	REFRESHMENT BREAK	
IV.	Your organization and persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds • How do you link to this clientele? • What related resources are available in your area?	10:15-11:30
V.	Families and individuals • How they relate to the issue of employment, what are their expectations, their attitudes? • Overview of Training Kit #1 — "Your job research" and Training Kit #2 — "Your son/daughter and the job research"	11:30-12:30
	LUNCH	12:30-1:30
VI.	*Three Lives – A Journey out of Darkness*	1:30-2:00
VII.	SPEAKERS • A Service Experience — Teresa Penafiel • A Personal Story — Peijian Shen	2:00-2:45
VIII.	Discussion with speakers	3:00– 3:30
IX.	Service providers — Intercultural Intervention — Training Kit #3 — "Awareness/Resources"	3:30-4:15
X.	Wrap-up	4:15-4:30

ORGANIZATIONAL SEMINAR

This seminar was co-facilitated by Teresa Penafiel (Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities) and Doris Rajan (l'Institut Roeher Institute).

Description of services

Given the recent climate in B.C. with the dramatic cuts levied to the social service sector, we anticipated much less attendance than we received. There was a tremendous response and interest from the community.

Mary Woo Simms, former Human Rights Commissioner of B.C. was very helpful in identifying speakers and participants and connecting us to key organizations in the Vancouver area.

Many of our participants worked in the mental health sector. While this was useful in challenging us to frame this issue in the context of the experiences of people with mental health issues, at times it offset the agenda and resulted in the overrepresentation of that issue from other disabilities. In addition, this seminar had considerably less representation from immigrant and ethnoracial services than it did from the disability service sector.

The following organizations were represented at this seminar. A number of people also attended with no organizational affiliation.

Organizations

BC Human Rights Commission
Canadian Mental Health – Supported Employment Initiative
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), BC Division
C.I.S.S.
Cultural Studies & Health Research Unit – School of Nursing UBC
GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre
IAMCARES
Immigrant Services Society (ISS) of B.C.
Mental Patients Association
North Shore Association for the Mentally Handicapped
North Shore Employment Services
PACT Employment
Partners in Employment, Langley ACL
People First of Canada
Richmond Health Services
Sea to Sky Community Services
Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC)
Surrey Employment Centre – Newton
Vancouver Coastal Mental Health

INTERESTING NOTES

Issues for People with Disabilities

- In the area of seeking employment, a critical issue for people with mental health disabilities is when or if to disclose their disability. The way many federal and provincial funding programs are structured is outcome based. Thus, disclosure is required in order to be eligible for certain employment programs.

- People, whether immigrants or not, feel 'valueless now that they can't work' due to a disability like a brain injury. There is a lot of shame and self-blame for the disability which makes people feel further marginalized.

Issues for Ethnoracial People

- Immigrant service workers described how people are angry because they had different expectations prior to coming to Canada. "This is not what we were told," stated an East European geologist who was told that there would be opportunities in her area. Part of the problem is that the certification and regulation process is set by occupations not by immigration policy.

- A worker in immigrant services felt that the onus should be on immigrants to learn the language and do their research—some "homework" on the availability of jobs, prior to arrival.

Issues for Ethnoracial and/or Immigrant People with Disabilities

- With the B.C. Human Rights Commission, where individuals file complaints if they are having problems with employment, the intersection of disability and race is noted. It is hard to separate when it is a case of discrimination based on disability, race or both.

- People working in employment services for individuals with disabilities noted the difficulty in accessing mainstream ESL courses and resources for their clients.

- We heard of a case through an Association for Community Living where a family with a daughter with a developmental disability was quite resistant to using the association's services because of the fear of how it might affect their daughter's ability to sponsor a potential marriage partner. This is a common issue—the fear of accessing disability services, because of peoples' perception of a detrimental impact on their migration status.

- A participant who is an immigrant with a disability stated, "*I never felt I was a disabled person until I attempted to come to Canada,*" reflecting on how difficult it is to immigrate here due to immigration policies that discriminate against people with disabilities.

- The migration process itself causes depression. We heard a number of stories about how frustrated individuals were because they were still unable to get a job, regardless of their years and years of education, due to a lack of Canadian experience and the non- recognition of

foreign credentials. They enter into a cycle of not caring with a considerable drop in self-esteem.

- For refugees post-traumatic stress with depression is quite common. It is difficult to access provincial disability benefits for this condition if you don't speak English, and an individual must be labelled with "clinical depression" to be eligible.

- Again, funding dictates access to a service, based on one's confirmation of "disability." For example, if immigrants are depressed they can't access PACT services because they are not "clinically depressed." Also, many of the counselling programs that are available do not acknowledge the mental health issues associated with the refugee experience.

- One worker in a disability service organization expressed the difficulty of trying to be "all things to all people." She felt that if the main barrier is cultural, then the organization needs to be able to refer that client to some other group with that expertise. However, often these groups don't have the expertise around disability.

- With the major changes in the B.C. government we see considerable cuts to supports for refugees and people with disabilities.

- Individual participants with disabilities asserted the need for service providers in all the related sectors to see the whole person first, not the disability or the race, etc.

Some Things Services Can Do to Help

- Give successes in the employment training and search processes. Small successes take you one step ahead, e.g., getting an interview is a victory.

- Train people to be peer supporters. Role models are very useful. Pair someone up with a successful ethnoracial person with a disability.

- It was recommended that employment service workers "move people along the spectrum of self-esteem." For example, in Hindu culture helping people is valued. Therefore a job such as working for "Meals on Wheels" gives a person relief and moves him away from depression and suicide, because he feels that he is contributing by helping others in greater need.

- Give realistic referrals. Speak with the employer ahead of time about the person's disability and when speaking to the individual, try to ascertain if he/she perceives any barriers that his/her disability might pose in his/her employment. Again, we must be cautious of the disclosure issue for people with mental health disabilities, because of discrimination. People need to know what employers are allowed to ask. Only disclose if there is a benefit to you.

- Support from the family and having confidence is key for people with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds in getting a job.

- We need to set aside longer periods of time to work with people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities to allow for language, cultural and disability accommodations.
- Policy changes could include "allocating" a certain percentage of jobs for people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.
- There needs to be better coordination of services, intersectoral networks and ongoing linkages like this seminar with key stakeholders.

Closing

At the closing period, participants expressed their interest in a follow-up meeting. They stated that one meeting, like this seminar, only allowed for 1) the identification and the sharing of information on this issue and 2) an opportunity to hear diverse sectors' experiences with ethnoracial people with disabilities in employment.

Therefore, in order to promote more long-term change, regular meetings and opportunities to network, strategize and share information are necessary.

Participants also expressed their interest in receiving information from the other seminars that we were going to hold in Montreal, Halifax and Toronto.

Montreal

March 28, 2002

This seminar was facilitated by Teresa Penafiel with Doris Rajan offering some information on disability and the labour market and the national commonalities of this issue.

• *Organizational Representation*

ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION

The following organizations participated in the Montreal seminar:

Action Main-d'oeuvre
Bureau du revendicateur du statut de réfugiés
CDEC R-P.P
Centre d'apprentissage parallel
Centre de réadaptation de l'ouest de Montréal
Centre de réadaptation Lucie-Bruneau
CLAM
CLE Crémazie
CLE Rosemont - Petite patrie
Commission des droits de la personne
Commission scolaire Marguerite-Bourgeoys
CRDI Normand Laramée
Mode d'Emploi
Option Travail
SEMO l'Étape

Other participants from the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities:

1. Maria Louise Hagemeister, President of the Board of Directors
2. Katia Atif, Assistant to Employment Project
3. Aylin Parunak, Social Assistant, responsible for employment follow-up
4. Luciana Soave, General Director
5. Celina Hasbun, Social Services Coordinator

ROUNDTABLE on the employment inclusion of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities

The Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities has been interested for quite some time in issues of labour market inclusion, job retention for people with disabilities and immigration. For this reason, it developed a two-part project, initiated in 1998 by a series of meetings with people who have had experience looking for a job.

Two important conclusions were reached following the meetings:

1. People with disabilities from ethnocultural communities need accommodation of supports during their search for a job. Generally, they are not able to adapt to existing resources, aimed for the Canadian average population, and often they fail in their attempt or they give up.

2. The (education, employment inclusion) system is not adapted to the presence of all these "clients" with special needs and/or is not ready to adapt to their needs.

Based on these conclusions (meetings with 50 immigrants with disabilities) and on the experience of the service team of the multi-ethnic association, a second stage was launched. Heritage Canada accepted to support a project to develop materials adapted to the needs of all of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities concerning issues of labour market inclusion.

The materials are available in a kit containing:

- seven information leaflets for people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities who want to look for a job (2 for people with intellectual disabilities)
- three training kits, each including the Trainer's Guide and the Participant's notebook. These kits were developed in order to train, inform and educate the three groups concerned by this issue:
  - people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities: Kit No. 1: "*Looking for a job*"
  - The family and friends of people with intellectual disabilities: Kit No. 2 "*your son/daughter is looking for a job*"
  - Advocates : Kit No. 3 "Education/Resources". This training is completed by the Notebook of the Series inVISIBLE Minority: "*people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities and labour market inclusion*"

The next stage of this project consisted of the promotion of the material, its use and in maximizing its impact. For this reason, the Multi-Ethnic Association entered a research and action partnership with the Roeher Institute, and launched a series of seminars throughout Canada. Three other cities besides Montreal were visited: Vancouver, Halifax and Toronto. In these three cities we wanted to establish links and reflect with groups who had not yet faced the double bind: "disability +immigration". The meetings enabled us to check that the situation outside Montreal is essentially the same, and that there was not even an equivalent of the Multi-Ethnic Association to prepare the facilitation and support of the labour market inclusion and the provision of adapted services to people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.

The meeting in Montreal was very different from the other cities. There were participants who had previous contact with the Multi-ethnic Association; some had received advocacy training. Others were attempting this for the first time (particularly people from ethnocultural communities).

The roundtable of March 28 gathered 52 participants from various environments concerned with employment inclusion. The objective of the meeting was to gather a certain number of partners or organizations concerned by the situation of people with disabilities who are looking for employment. The objective of the meeting was to give an overview of the situation from various perspectives, and this was accomplished by the presentations of the panelists.

The panelists offered a vision of the various aspects of inclusion in employment according to their field of expertise. Each panelist identified various points, as well as gaps or needs in the current system and the needs of disabled individuals from ethnocultural communities.

- Services for people with intellectual disabilities faced mainly linguistic barriers: biased evaluations, difficult communication, limitation in the understanding of instructions, in interpersonal relations and in the accomplishment of tasks which the person could accomplish in his or her mother tongue. The second aspect that has a strong impact on the employment inclusion process of all these individuals is that negotiations with the family of ethnocultural communities might be difficult because of various factors (language barrier, no confidence in the counsellor, isolated environment, etc.). Another barrier that was mentioned was the status of the individual (immigration) and the beliefs and prejudices of the community of origin.

  As for the employers, prejudices against potential employees from ethnocultural communities may represent an obstacle to hiring and job retention.

  As far as he's concerned, the employment counsellor should be aware of the values of his social environment and take them into account in order to adapt his vision to that of his client. The training offered by the Multi-Ethnic Association is a means to improve and adapt the intervention to the needs of disabled individuals from ethnocultural communities as well as working in partnership with this organization.

- The services of the CLE give priority to specific clients, such as immigrants, women, people aged 45 years and over. As for people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, the barrier is that the services provided treat these clients as separate groups: immigrants and people with disabilities. For the latter, there are specific services such as workplace accommodation, resume preparation, employment grants, etc. The employment training and recruitment services are offered by partners (extended employment services for various types of limitations, such as intellectual disability).

  The lack of statistics regarding disabled people and of more specific data regarding various categories of clients and/or the barriers to employment they face is an obstacle to developing adequate programs. The 1996 census data gave 11% as the unemployment rate for the total population of the island of Montreal. The rate for individuals born outside Canada was 19%. This rate varies from one community to another and it goes from 36% for the Africans to 14.1% for the Greek. None of the data mentions people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.

- The job search services for immigrants seldom receive people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities. The immigrant status itself may be a barrier to employment, a problem related to the validation of qualifications and experience outside Canada, to the lack of training appropriate for the Canadian market and to the traditions of the receiving society. All these problems are experienced by people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, in addition to their limitation.

- The shock of the difference between the image promoted by Canada or Quebec abroad and the reality that the new immigrants face is dramatic. This disenchantment does not help their inclusion in employment. The greatest challenge the employment counsellor faces is to support his client during the adaptation to the new reality, which sometimes is in total opposition to their expectations. This reality changes every year and depends on the economic context of the moment, but in general new immigrants do not have the best chances to be included in the employment market.

Question period

During this period, the panelists provided answers to the participants on various questions.

- The subject of grants to businesses who hire immigrants was discussed as well as other means to encourage the employment integration of people with disabilities. The equal access program of the government does not include people with disabilities since they are already "helped" by a special, previous act, which is not enforced.

- The issue of Canadian experience is just one way to justify discrimination towards immigrants. This is added to the fact that immigrants do not know the system, and therefore acquiring experience becomes very difficult.

- Language acquisition is much more than the acquisition or functional basis. Understanding concepts is the obstacle to employment integration.

- The relationship to authority is the cultural characteristic which plays a part in employment integration. The attitude in front of the employer, co-workers, advocates, is sometimes a barrier difficult to overcome if these individuals are not aware of the difficulty and of their impact on the new immigrant.

- Employers need more education regarding people with disabilities. IAS for people with disabilities has already implemented this process, however not necessarily for immigrants and even less for immigrants with disabilities.

- Employers also find it difficult to adapt a workplace for an individual and then, when there is a change of employees, start the process all over again. (Instability of subsidized employment)

- How to educate people regarding all levels of difficulty that hiring a person with disabilities might cause: accommodation, issues of personal relations, behaviour issues, communication (deaf people, people with an accent, speech impediments, etc.). This may also be harmful to employment, since it is discouraging to think of so many problems, even if they are only potential.

- When an intercultural intervention is made, the key to success is the time that the advocate can spend with the individual. The advocate should pay attention to the responses of the individual to decide the rhythm of intervention.

- The situation cannot be improved by a binding law; attitudes and situations can only change by the development of real and sustainable partnerships. The successful integration of the idea of employment equity in the policies of companies involves contacting the Human resources department first in order to educate them.

- The situation of the double bind of people with disabilities of ethnocultural communities results in a partial processing of the file. These files are not "the norm" for any of the existing services.

- Despite the statements of the government regarding the loss of qualified labour force among immigrants and the confirmation of discriminating conditions pertaining to wages, little is done to change the situation. The collective claims of the NGO, sharing the resources and partnerships could be efficient answers to the issue of the labour market inclusion of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.

- Having to start all over again after many years of employment experience could be counterproductive and frustrating for people with disabilities who have already had to prove themselves elsewhere.

- The undervaluation of the skills of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities is a generalized problem particularly for people with intellectual disabilities who have a language impediment (speech impairment, aphasia, dyslexia).

- People with disabilities from ethnocultural communities try sometimes to "hide" their limitation. This is a heavy burden but they know that the accumulation of a double negative categorization, immigrant and handicapped, does not increase their chance to find employment.

- One way to help fight this situation is to accompany the individual in order to give him or her the opportunity to better understand the limitations related to the disability and to the immigrant status. Only then will the person be able to describe themselves in terms of their needs and their strengths. From this point of view, the evaluation is the starting point of the process.

- An issue that might prove interesting to discuss is the evaluation and whether to mention the limitation when looking for a job and the consequences of revealing the truth or of keeping silent (particularly concerning issues of mental health). A participant in the Vancouver seminar had already said that it was better "to mention only the information regarding your limitation that might be to your advantage". It would be interesting to see to what extent people with disabilities whose immigrant status is pending or was difficult to obtain choose not to speak about their limitation for fear of risking deportation.

Conclusion

The Roundtable concluded with an overview of ways to improve coordination and to better respond to employment-related needs of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.

Barriers/Needs	Means/ course of action
1. The environment has difficulties to include the cultural characteristics and the limitations	1. Public education and offers of support to retain the job.
2. The individual lacks motivation (circulation of multiple cases, wasting time)	2. Collaboration of all the organizations involved in the same case might prevent the waste of time, lack of motivation and might lead to positive results in a short time. This could be achieved through existing structures and other types of collaboration.
3. The system is not flexible, and the knowledge and/or the will to adapt interventions is lacking	3. The organizations (government and others) may profit from the training of advocates. The Multiethnic Association provides training on request. The adapted interventions enable encouraging results for the advocate and for the individual in search of employment, whether they belong to ethnocultural communities or not.
4. Organizational dynamics: limited time for interventions (developed for the average Quebec model)	4. Organizations should consider greater flexibility in their interventions and should train their staff regarding the reality of a diverse client base whose needs are not always similar.
5. The advocates work sometimes in isolation without thinking of the specific needs of the client.	5. The organizations should develop a work protocol or ethics to serve clients according to their specific requirements and refer the cases that exceed their specialization to the appropriate resources.
6. Lack of immediately available resources.	6. Develop a directory (easily accessible) and update it regularly (Internet); make it available to staff (work protocol)

The participants in this Roundtable expressed their interest in a follow-up meeting in the next few months. The development of work tools is particularly important (as is the directory) and a means to facilitate intervention; however, we should avoid burdening any group too much. We'll have to collaborate on issues of interest for everybody. The minutes will be sent to participants as the first step of the follow-up.

Halifax

Friday, April 19, 2002 — Nova Scotia Public Archives

- *Agenda*
- *Organizational Representation*
- *Interesting Notes*

AGENDA

I.	Registration and Coffee	9:00 – 9:30
II.	Welcome, Introduction and Purpose of Training	9:30– 9:45
III.	Barriers to integration faced by persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds generally, then specifically as related to job integration	9:45-10:30
	REFRESHMENT BREAK	
IV.	Your organization and persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds	10:45-12:30
	(Scenario Exercise)	
	LUNCH	12:30-1:30
V.	*Three Lives – A Journey out of Darkness* – Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario	1:30-2:00
VI.	SPEAKERS	2:00 – 3:00

1) TERESA PENAFIEL OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC ASSOCIATION: OVERVIEW OF TRAINING KITS
   Kit #1 - "Your job research"
   Kit #2 - "Your son/daughter and the job research"
   Kit #3 - "Awareness/Resources" – for Service providers
2) A Personal Story – job integration a challenge
3) Employment Centre Service Worker

REFRESHMENT BREAK

VII.	What would make a difference? Things that can be done right away Long-term change	3:15 – 4:00

ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION

There were a variety of organizations that took part in the Halifax training, including:

Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures
Halifax ACL
Independent Living Resource Centre
Metro Community Food for Thought
Metro Community Housing Association
Metro Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA)
Regional Residential Services Society
St. John New Brunswick ACL's Employment Project
Teamwork Cooperative

INTERESTING NOTES

One representative from MISA explained that only a small percentage of immigrants are not qualified people. The Canadian government actively pursues immigrants but Canada has never met its target, picking and choosing who they will let in. The priority is given to those who will be quickly integrated into society. In March of 2001, 200 to 250 immigrants/refugees came to Halifax. Normally, immigration to Halifax is due to secondary migration, i.e. people coming to the city from other parts of Canada like P.E.I.

MISA provides an Immigrant Entrepreneur Service, and sees many program participants from Iraq, Palestine, Jordan and, more recently, from Afghanistan—mainly women and children. They have not seen many people with disabilities, but they do see the parents of children with disabilities. This prompted them to form the Committee for Parents with Children with Special Needs. In this committee, MISA, hospitals and other social services, like the ACL come together to examine and strategize around the issue of newcomers with special needs. The primary barriers to full participation noted are communicating and navigating the health system, connecting with services, accessing higher education and issues related to children and school.

At the Halifax ACL, a representative talked about school meetings with families where she found language to be a real barrier to communication. It is different for these families to see all these professionals talking about their child. They need some education on why this is done here so there is a process of building trust and understanding roles. The families were connected with the ACL when a social worker from the school gave them a brochure advertising the ACL—however the association was not equipped to work with immigrants. That is the impetus for the ACL's very active involvement with the MISA-run committee on disability and ethnicity.

The Committee hears dozens of complaints from schools regarding the immigrant and newcomer children "misbehaving." As the MISA rep explained:

> "Imagine an immigrant child with a learning disability and whose parents are without work...Our system creates disabilities and abuse —a lot of Vietnamese were put in as slow learners when in fact it was more about the schools needing to deal with the difference —in culture and language."

Although there are tools for ESL (English as a Second Language) assessment, there is nothing related to disability and learning disability—or the combination of both. Some schools with a higher immigrant population—like Clayton Park and Bedford—have school support workers.

The Special Needs Committee explained that the first entry is with a professional. The goal is to translate information into other languages—Arabic, Chinese, Croatian and others. They have to ensure that the information is in plain language and is culturally sensitive and appropriate.

One woman working in a program targeted at those who are homebound finds that housing is the main issue. The languages she is encountering are Croatian, Arabic and English.

An individual working in the area of housing felt that it is a sad situation when you find young adults with disabilities living in nursing homes because they have no other place to go. He felt that there is a strong need for more integrated community services. They do not see many people from diverse backgrounds, however he felt that the staff members are biased towards culture and although this bias is "innocent", we still need to apply a systemic approach to change attitudes.

Wanda Thomas Bernard of the Association of Black Social Workers was referred to as someone in Halifax who can provide information on a variety of issues related to race. It was felt that there are a great many resources out there, however you need to know where to go for them. An opportunity like this seminar, to connect and share our experiences and resources, is optimal.

As one woman put it:

> "We need to continually challenge the services and the system. We need to challenge ourselves to adapt the services to meet the needs of the people we are serving... we have a fear of our own ignorance... we pretend that we know it all..."

It was felt that we shouldn't lump people into one category, but rather need to look at people as individuals—with individual needs.

> "Once you are labelled you internalize this. People are really vulnerable to what they have been told they are, when you are conditioned to believe that this is what you are."

The group also spoke about how the bottom line of this issue is the lack of funding. It was felt that someone in the government should "take the brunt of the fall to start something that can be carried on to future generations. Only then will things change—stop passing things on..."

Resources - Halifax - Multilingual Interpreters

1) MISA has a list of volunteers

2) CHIS (Cultural Health Interpreters Service)

3) IWK - Women's and Children's Hospital

Toronto

May 14, 2002 — 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Scadding Court Community Centre

- *Agenda*
- *Organizational Representation*
- *Interesting Notes*

AGENDA

I.	Registration and Coffee	8:30 – 9:00
II.	Welcome, Introduction and Purpose of Training	9:00– 9:15
III.	Barriers to integration faced by persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds generally, then specifically as related to job integration	9:15-10:00
IV.	Your organization and persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds	10:00-10:30
Refreshment Break		
V.	Your organization and persons with disabilities from ethnocultural backgrounds (*continued*)	10:45-12:00
Lunch		12:00-12:30
VI.	*Three Lives – A Journey out of Darkness* – Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario	12:30-1:00
VII.	Speakers • Two stories – job integration a challenge • Employment Centre Service Worker	1:00 – 2:00
Refreshment Break		
VIII.	Overview of training kits: The Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities - Montreal *Kit #1 - "Your job research"* *Kit #2 - "Your son/daughter and the job research"* *Kit #3 - "Awareness/Resources" – for Service providers*	2:15 – 2:45
IX.	What would make a difference? • Things that can be done right away • Long-term change	2:45– 3:30

ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION

The following organizations were represented at this event:

Aboriginal Employment and Training
AYCE Employment Centre
Epilepsy Toronto
Essex County Association for Community Living
Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO)
Link Up Employment
Microskills
Ontario Association for Community Living
Peel Halton Acquired Brain Injury Service
Project Work
The Toronto Association for Community Living (T.A.C.L.) – many representatives from the ACL attended from a variety of programs.
Work on Track
Scadding Court Community Centre

INTERESTING NOTES

Some issues

T.A.C.L.

A representative from the T.A.C.L.'s Job Placement program shared the following observations on their organization and this issue:

The biggest challenge is finding the right match of person with job. With recent funding changes, it is very hard to support people in finding employment. They are not seeing many newcomers. She felt that they need to go out to individual community centres. This is the largest program serving people with intellectual disabilities in Toronto and she felt that they were coming across as ignorant of issues.

Although members of the staff are ethnically diverse, management is less so. Women of colour/immigrants may see this as a problem. For example, a Chinese newcomer with no English is usually sent to assessment first, but it was felt that because he/she didn't have English, he couldn't be competitive. Waiting lists can also be problematic.

Link-Up: settlement services, language, for those immigrants legally eligible to work

This is a referral Progress Career Planning Centre, Microskills (settlement services) or ethno-specific organization. It is a challenge for these organizations to serve people with disabilities. People with intellectual disabilities come in at the general entry level. As long as there are specific tasks and they understand these tasks with the help of a job coach, they are fine. It is not essential to have English, however multilingual job coaches are necessary.

Microskills — computer training, self-employment for women

These are not physically accessible, and don't have accessible programs for visually impaired people. How do we help people without turning them away? With the Ontario Disability Support Program (O.D.S.P.), they wouldn't have a chance to get a job that would make it worthwhile anyway.

With job development officers, it is difficult enough to get employers to buy into the program, and when you add ethnicity and language it is extremely hard. Employers are concerned about hazards in the workplace so when you have someone that doesn't read, they are very hesitant.

Woodgreen Program

They have a job club and are creating job search skills for change. They focus on skill development and building the relationship with employers. It was felt that you need to integrate the whole person into the whole culture.

Other Issues:

- Problems of deaf people who are from other countries and do not have American Sign Language (A.S.L.). How do we deal with this?
- People felt that it was very hard to "sell to the employer", especially if they don't have the language.
- There is a need to be realistic and honest with potential employers and clients. Often there are multiple issues involved, e.g. dual diagnosis. People can sometimes only work a few hours a day and have medical concerns. When you add ethnicity and immigrant experiences it is even more difficult.
- Intellectual disability is not distinguished from mental health in some cultures. "He's crazy" is often the only way to label this in some languages. The person may be seen as useless back home and wants to be freed from that here.
- Some people with disabilities want to become more Canadian since their culture rejects them. Some see their own family as a real barrier and feel that immigrants with disabilities are vulnerable in their own community. If workers want to help, they have to deal with the family. It is detrimental when parents speak for their children.
- Often workers feel torn because the family may be dependent on the disability benefit for their survival.
- What happens to refugee claimants who are not eligible for O.D.S.P.?
- Another issue of concern is sponsorship agreements where the sponsor is responsible for supporting the person with a disability and for 10 years they are not entitled to O.D.S.P.
- If you have worked in Canada for 10 years you are eligible for C.P.P. —some countries have an agreement on this.
- Sponsorship issue makes people ineligible for O.D.S.P., and other disability benefits.
- There are real internalized cultural barriers around the issue of disability.
- Stress management on the job is a big issue for people with disabilities, so many programs offer training related to this and monitor participants' progress on the job. People with disabilities may not be able to work an eight-hour day.
- Some of the organizations working with immigrants and refugees identified issues such as substance abuse, flashbacks and post-traumatic stress. Therefore, counselling is needed but workers do not know where to go to get this. A woman involved in trying to place immigrant people in jobs stated, "E.S.L. is a problem—English is poor, accents [are a] large issue here!"

- Other participants felt that pronunciation is more of an issue than accents. We need to know that we live in a diverse society that comes with "accents." There is much prejudice and other connotations associated with accents. For instance, people are often told to "speak louder." In addition to the accents, people with intellectual disabilities may not speak clearly or communicate in ways that we are accustomed to. Therefore more exposure to such individuals is needed in order to understand how they communicate.

- There is no support for immigrants with regard to employment. In addition, there is no money to support foreign skilled people to find work. A participant felt that we "take an easier route to place people in low-level positions....there [are] obviously systemic issues." She also felt that employment services have a role to play in placing people in higher positions. Others felt that it was a "good thing as a starting point to get the immigrants with disabilities in any job!"

- Another issue discussed was using volunteer work to gain experience. Immigrants need Canadian experience and can access project work for volunteer jobs to get that experience. But T.A.C.L. felt that unpaid work experience is not desirable and "that people are being taken advantage of." In addition, the expectations are different as soon as someone is paid, i.e. they are more productive and this wasn't like they thought it would be.

What needs to be done and some useful practices

- Disability organizations need to enhance knowledge of ethnicity/immigration and vice versa.

- Assess where people are in the immigration process and be aware of people's ethnocultural backgrounds and the accommodations they have already made and are willing to make around their disability.

- Recognize the importance of understanding the family dynamics.

- Be clear with the client about what you do and how you do your work, then provide them with options and choices.

- Treat every client as an individual requiring individual plans.

- A possible strategy may be to approach employers from ethno-specific companies and target that community for employment. With small businesses, wage subsidies are a selling point.

- Need a list of ethno-specific companies.

- Need information on the perception certain cultural groups have about disability.

- One-stop program for people with disabilities is desirable from immigrant/employment services' perspective. Goodwill Toronto has a "sort of one-stop shopping program." This type of program needs to be funded.

- Have to fill out O.D.S.P. forms for parents that can't read or write.
- Approach call services with banks that serve large populations of certain ethnic communities.
- Need staff that are representative of people with disabilities and/or from ethnic groups.
- It would be useful to have a "map" of C.P.P., O.D.S.P. and other income supports and the relationship to immigration status and citizenship.
- Need more meetings like this seminar that provide a forum for this type of information sharing and networking, bringing the disability, immigrant and employment services together.
- ERDCO should do more workshops for employers.
- We should have more regular partnerships with disability/immigrant services, e.g., ERDCO could come to organizations and make presentations.
- To develop a good relationship with funders, e.g., ERDCO, organizations like this need sustainable funding and an infrastructure.
- More service provider agencies/government themselves should take a leadership role in hiring people with disabilities and from racial/ethnic groups.
- Need more knowledge on the different types of disability and immigrant services.
- Use stories to inform and educate.
- Need list of multilingual and cultural interpreters.

4

Summary of Outcomes

Similarities and Differences

In examining the commonalities that were witnessed through the development and implementation of the training sessions, we are now able to provide a national framework. Commonalities relate to the consequences of national federal immigration policy and federal transfers to the provinces for disability support and employment services. The differences noted largely relate to the variations in provincial programs and supports.

The following highlights some of the common issues that were applicable in Vancouver, Montreal, Halifax and Toronto.

(1) Relationship between immigration policy and disability: i.e.

- Entitlement to specific types of disability supports related to migrant status, e.g. for refugees who may often have become disabled due to war and are dealing with post-traumatic stress and depression but are not entitled to access supports for mental health.

- Misconception of how the use of disability-related supports may negatively affect a person's status. For example, in Vancouver we heard how a family was quite hesitant to use employment-related services specifically targeted to people with disabilities because they were worried that it would affect the ability of their daughter, who has an intellectual disability, to sponsor her potential arranged marriage partner.

(2) Migration process causes depression and frustration

- People never felt that they were "disabled" until they had to deal with the consequences of discrimination in immigration policies. For example, a family wanted to immigrate to Canada, but it took longer for their son with a disability to get approved.

- People are frustrated and become depressed because their credentials and many years of education are not recognized here in Canada.

(3) Discrimination and prejudice entrenched in social policy, in institutions and manifested at the individual level

(4) Unequal access and knowledge of health care, social services, schooling and housing
Immigrants lack basic knowledge about systems in Canada and how to gain access to them. Social programs and services may vary considerably from those in their homeland and multilingual information may not be available or easily attainable. Settlement workers must provide support in navigating the system in terms of people's entitlement to services, supports and housing.

(5) The cultural perception of disability
Every society has excluded people with disabilities from full participation in every key avenue of community and societal life. Canada has an equally poor record in the treatment of people with disabilities particularly related to institutionalization, exclusion from access to most social and recreational facilities, denial of basic human rights, i.e. the right to marry, have children, own property, etc., labour market exclusion and abject poverty. However, due to a pronounced and strong disability and general human rights movement in Canada and the U.S., people with disabilities have reclaimed many rights and aim to keep pushing for full access to society.

What immigrant communities might bring, therefore, is a different perception based on how their country or society has progressed ideologically and practically on the issue of disability. In some immigrant cultures we have heard of such perceptions as disability viewed as a curse or punishment for the family's actions, etc. This has clear implications for an individual's sense of self-worth, belonging, identity and confidence.

(6) Language – neither English or French
One of the primary barriers to full participation in society for immigrants and refugees is not being able to speak English or French. People with disabilities may be even less likely to speak one of the official languages due to increased isolation and dependency on their sponsored relative.

(7) Lack of appropriate and culturally sensitive information, services and programs
For people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, there is a lack of understanding of the interplay of race, language, ethnicity, culture and disability. For services that are concerned with the issue of job integration for this community, i.e. employment, disability and immigrant support services, this lack of understanding results in services not recognizing the unique needs of people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities.

Differences

The major differences noted are based on the provincial governments' policy and funding allocation of federal dollars for disability benefits, social assistance and employment training programs.

The most dramatic example is in B.C., where recent cuts to disability supports, social assistance and social services put forward by the Liberal government under Premier Campbell, resulted in some 30 percent of their public service being fired and extreme cuts to social programming. People with

disabilities from ethnocultural communities, already experiencing exclusion, will feel the effects of these cuts the most.

In Ontario, the *Social Assistance Reform Act* enacted the *Ontario Works Act*, and the *Ontario Disability Support Program Act* in 1997 that introduced major reforms to programs relevant to people with disabilities and the labour market. The Employment Supports initiative under the O.D.S.P., emphasizes mainstream rather than sheltered employment for people with disabilities.

Other notable changes include:

- Persons with disabilities are no longer required to be labelled as "permanently unemployable" in order to qualify for benefits;
- A broader variety of professionals other than physicians (e.g., psychologists, mental health outreach workers, social workers) are now able to verify that an applicant has a disability;
- In circumstances where a person with a disability secures a job that does not work out, the person is quickly reinstated to income support. Only financial need will be retested, not disability.
- The removal of the "permanently unemployable" criteria for eligibility for O.D.S.P. has allowed more people with disabilities who want to and are able to work, continue to receive the supports they need during the transition to the workplace.
- Some improvements seem to have been made in back-to-work programs for people with disabilities in Ontario.

In Quebec, the additional layer of French and English and the language-related entitlement to services for immigrants further complicates the situation for immigrants.. In addition, particularly in Montreal, there are very separate employment services for people with disabilities and for immigrants and newcomers.

A Way to Understand

An easy way to understand the issues and challenges that ethnocultural people with disabilities face, is by using a three-level analysis. This helps to minimize the confusion of the complex web in which people are entangled.

By understanding what the external environment and issues are, how they pose a challenge to the organization of services on the community level, and how they affect the individual with a disability from an ethnoracial background, we are better equipped to develop individualized strategies of change.

Macro, Mesa and Micro Levels

Macro Level – Broader economic, socio-political and/or environmental factors that affect people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities, i.e. those things that are largely out of the individual's control:

- An increasingly competitive and exclusionary market coupled with diminishing state supports. This leaves people with disabilities from ethnocultural communities with additional barriers to labour market participation.
- Other systemic factors, i.e. the lack of access to training and education and lack of accommodation in the workforce and disincentives related to the maintenance of benefits, etc. As a result, people do not have access to the highly skilled/technical positions that would offer the type of wage that they would need to move out of positions of poverty.
- There are very few jobs available and the ones that are available are increasingly low-skilled, with poor wages, non-traditional hours, shift work, contract with no benefits, part-time rather than full-time, and there is a huge population competing for the very few positions that are available.
- Immigration policies and access to disability support benefits, discrimination in immigration policies towards women and people with disabilities.
- There are no jobs and there is pronounced discrimination against people with disabilities and ethoracial minorities and immigrants.
- Disincentives in welfare/assistance programs, i.e. losing disability benefit upon employment, tying of employment programs to benefits or assistance.

Mesa Level – Realities at the community or service level:

- Employment training programs do not lead to jobs
- Transportation issues
- The lack of sensitivity and thus appropriate programs, in health, disability and immigrant services around this dual issue.

Micro Level – Factors affecting the person at the individual and immediate family level:

- Low self-esteem for immigrants and people with disabilities
- Racism, ableism and discrimination in the employment process
- Education—whether it is credentials that go unrecognized or not being able to access education and training
- Effects of cuts to disability benefits and/or the penalization in income when entering the labour market.

Needs and Areas of Interest

Disability employment services were not aware of the particular needs of immigrants, even in cities where they were seeing clients from ethnoracial and/or immigrant communities. Relatedly, immigrant services were not aware of the existing resources for people with disabilities.

Participants in all cities expressed a strong desire and need to continue their learning and development in this area. They welcomed the information shared in the seminar and the opportunity to link with people and services that they would not usually have contact with.

Every city agreed that this seminar served the important purpose of introducing people from diverse service backgrounds to this issue. It served to highlight major barriers and real life experiences and challenges from the individual's and the service provider's perspectives. People agreed that this is an ongoing learning process and felt strongly that they needed more forums like this seminar.

Follow-up

Seminar participants wanted to receive the following items:

1) Participant Lists – to keep in touch and use for referral and information purposes
2) Notes from their seminar
3) Seminar Notes and Participant Lists from other cities
4) Copies of City-Specific Databases.

This report provides all participants with items 1-3. Unfortunately we would need more resources and time (to obtain consent) to be able to provide people with item 4.

5

The Next Phase of Work

The next phase of this work would be primarily in the area of developing tools that can be used at the community level. Some ideas are:

City-Specific Directories – These directories would present information on services offered and their accessibility in terms of disability accommodations and multilingual and cross-cultural supports. They could also include summary city-specific referral sheets containing organizational names and phone numbers. The idea is that these sheets could be posted in service organizations for quick referral.

Development, Production, Distribution of Fact Sheets – These brief, easy-to-read documents could be mass produced and distributed to all key stakeholders. Information provided would include an overview of this issue, an outline of the key barriers and some best practices.

Internet Bulletin – This could be in the form of a web site where resources could be provided by city and service providers could discuss their challenges and needs and provide helpful tips to others.

Seminar II – Using a more focused outreach process, i.e. ensuring more balance between key stakeholder services, we would revisit these cities. We would also work closely with the organizations in each city that are already focused on this work, i.e. Halifax's "Special Needs Committee", Montreal's Multi-Ethnic Association and Toronto's ERDCO. In Vancouver there were a few organizations that might want to play a leadership role in establishing a committee or group specifically focused on this issue. We would also expand Seminar II to include Winnipeg and either Edmonton or Calgary in Alberta.

The main purpose of Seminar II would be to distribute the resources outlined above and to conduct short- and long-term planning. The planning process would involve the development of realistic (in terms of resources) and implementable (i.e. concrete with practical steps) work plans with timelines. In Seminar II we would also determine what resources now need to be developed to support the work plans and to further advance work in this area.

Appendix #1:
Sample Invitation letter

National Training Project —
JOB INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

We are writing to invite you to our training seminar in Vancouver that will take place on:

Date:
Time:
Location:

This seminar is being offered free of charge and is ideal for those working in disability, immigrant or ethno-specific organizations, and employment centres. Any social service that comes in contact with people from ethnoculturally diverse backgrounds and/or people with disabilities will benefit from this training.

As most of you are probably well aware, people with disabilities experience extreme economic marginalization and face disproportionate barriers when attempting to secure employment. In addition, there are a number of obstacles facing immigrants, refugees and ethnoracially diverse communities, such as learning a new language and adapting to a new social, medical, legal and educational system and discrimination, which also serve as very real barriers to full participation in the labour market.

Persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities experience both of these realities resulting in intensified issues such as unequal rights to some services due to their migration status, unequal access to services due to linguistic and cultural barriers, very low self-image perpetuated by ableism and racism, the cultural perception of disability within their own country of origin, etc., all of which make it very difficult to move forward and take the necessary steps to seek employment.

The Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Montreal) and L'Institut Roeher Institute have developed a national training seminar, based on the resources "Disability- Immigration-Employment" produced by the Multi-Ethnic Association.

This training seminar has been developed in specific response to job integration barriers experienced by ethnoracially diverse persons with disabilities. The seminar is aimed at service providers, advocates, management and policy makers as well as individuals and families.

We hope that you will be able to examine the work of your organization and through this process begin to identify ways in which you can increase accessibility to persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities to your services and programs.

Interested in getting involved? Follow these three quick steps:

1. **Registration Form:** Complete the attached registration form and e-mail back to Joan Zarbatany of L'Institut Roeher Institute at jzarbatany@roeher.ca. Feel free to invite as many key people from your organization as you deem appropriate.Unfortunately however, space is limited, so please try and e-mail your registration ASAP.

2. **Flyer:** Attached you will also see a flyer that you can print and post in your organization. There is also a line for you to type in local contact information. We wanted to extend this invitation to ethnoculturally diverse individuals with disabilities and their families. Their participation in this training seminar will expose them to resources and information that they may find quite useful.

3. **Send this e-mail:** Please forward this e-mail with attachments to any listserv or membership list that you feel would be appropriate.

Also attached is the agenda for the day. If you have any questions please call Doris Rajan or Teresa Penafiel (contact information below) for more information.

We are really looking forward to a good turnout in *Vancouver* and we would like to thank you ahead of time for working towards increasing access to the labour market for all people!

Appendix #2: Sample Registration Form

TRAINING SEMINAR

JOB INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Organized by L'Institut Roeher & Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities

Vancouver, March 20, 2002, Roundhouse Community Centre
181 Roundhouse Mews, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) with Titles (if applicable): _____

_____

Organization/Agency or other Affiliation: _____

_____

Area of interest/expertise: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov. _____ Postal Code _____

Phone number: ( ) _____ Fax number: ( ) _____

E-Mail: _____

Special requests: (sign language/oral interpreters, language interpretation (French or other languages), attendants, special dietary needs, support persons, advisor, space for guide dog, etc.)

Appendix #3: Sample Flyer

FREE SEMINAR

ON JOB INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES FROM ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

When: Tuesday, May 14, 2002

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Scadding Court Community Centre
707 Dundas Street West
(Dundas and Bathurst)
416-392-0335

Cost: Free, with a light lunch provided

What is it?

This is a training seminar organized by L'Institut Roeher Institute (Toronto) and the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (Montreal) and co-hosted here in Toronto by ERDCO (Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario). The seminar has been developed in direct response to barriers that persons with disabilities from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds experience when trying to get a job.

Who is this for?

- Persons with disabilities from ethnocultural communities
- Family members
- Service providers, advocates, management and policy makers working in disability, immigrant or ethno-specific organizations and employment centres

For more information and to sign up, please contact Doris Rajan at 416-661-9611 ext 210 or e-mail drajan@sympatico.ca or Teresa Penafiel at tpenafie@ameiph.com.